

GMCM Delbert D. Black, USN

First Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy

January 13, 1967 to April 1, 1971



Master Chief Petty Officer Delbert D. Black was born on July 11, 1922 in Orr, Oklahoma, graduating from high school in 1940. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy on March 14, 1941.

Upon completion of recruit training in San Diego, California, he was assigned to USS MARYLAND (BB-46) and was aboard in Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He later served at Receiving Station, Pearl Harbor; USS BARNES (DE-353); Naval Air Base, Samar, Philippines; USS GARNERS BAY (AVP-36); USS BOXER (CVA-21); USS ANTIETAM (CVA-36); U.S. Navy Ceremonial Guard, Washington, D.C.; Yokosuka, Japan ship repair facilities; USS BRUSH (DD-745); USS CARPENTER (DDE-825); USS NORFOLK (DL-1); Recruiting Duty, Columbia, Tennessee; USS SPRINGFIELD (CLG-62); and FAAWTC, Dam Neck, Virginia.

On January 13, 1967, the Secretary of the Navy announced Master Chief Black was selected as the First Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy. As such, he was the highest ranking enlisted man in the U.S. Navy, serving as the enlisted representative to the Chief of Naval Operations. He counseled the highest Navy councils on problems associated with enlisted guidance, leadership, and policy.

Upon retirement from active duty, Master Chief Black continued his involvement with the Navy through retired and active duty organizations. He was an active member of the USO Council of Central Florida; the Fleet Reserve Association; and Co-Chairman on the Secretary of Navy Committee on Retired Personnel.

Master Chief Black was the first Navy enlisted man to receive the Distinguished Service Medal. He also holds the Navy Unit Commendation, Navy Good Conduct (7 stars), American Defense (1 star), American Campaign, Asiatic Pacific (8 stars), World War II Victory, China Service, Navy Occupation, National Defense (1 star), Korean Service, Vietnam Service (3 stars), Antarctica Service, United Nations, Philippine Liberation (2 stars), Philippine PUC, Vietnam Campaign with device, and Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Meritorious Unit Citation (Gallantry Cross).

Master Chief Black is married to the former Ima J. Nesmith of McClarty, Alabama, and they have one son. They currently reside in Winter Park, Florida.